

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 12, 2009

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
The Capitol, Room S-131
Washington, D.C. 20510-0001

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
The Capitol, Room S-144A
Washington, D.C. 20510-0001

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

As the Appropriations Committee continues to work on an economic stimulus package for consideration by the Senate, We write to strongly encourage the inclusion of \$381 million in additional funding for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Buildings and Facilities account under the Department of Agriculture for projects with completed design work.

This account provides funds for the acquisition of land, construction, repair, improvement, extension, and alteration of facilities and equipment used by the ARS. An additional \$381 million would fund construction on buildings with completed design work. Due to previous budgetary constraints, the ARS Buildings and Facilities account has not been fully funded in recent agriculture appropriations measures, leaving construction incomplete on many ongoing projects. Stimulus dollars directed toward these shovel-ready projects would be spent immediately, and would begin to bring new facilities online in as few as two years time.

One of the stated purposes of the proposed stimulus plan is to provide the infrastructure necessary to bring the country fully in to the 21st Century. Funding the ARS Buildings and Facilities account now would initiate long-term research plans sooner and hasten the impact this research would have on agricultural development. Supplementary funding to the ARS's Buildings and Facilities account would not only stimulate the economy in the short-term through construction spending, it would also bring economy expanding research results to the table sooner. Studies have shown that the past public investment in agricultural research has resulted in large economic benefits of at least 35 percent annual rate of return.

January 12, 2009

Page 2

The ARS provides leading edge research and development on important issues like nutrition, food quality, animal production, crop production, and sustainability. Because the ARS must provide its findings to the general public, its research has great potential to provide economic benefits quickly that are felt broadly.

The proposed stimulus legislation is a tremendous opportunity to improve our agricultural research infrastructure. As this process moves forward, we understand that you will be faced with many difficult decisions. We appreciate your leadership on the Appropriations Committee, and look forward to working with you on this legislation.

Sincerely,

My Bander

Patty Murray

Lois Wicker

Mary Landrini

Mike Crayor

Maria Canham

Jeff Bond

J. R. King